

President Bush's War on Terrorism from Clausewitz's Perspectives

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1. ***“War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.”*** This definition of war has two meanings. First, the use of force is the means of war. The mobilization of the military forces, i.e. the use of force, is intrinsic in warfare. Bush Administration called the 9.11 attack acts of war and in this situation; the only appropriate response was a military one --- under the laws of war, not under the U.S. criminal code. Clausewitz's interstate war ideas can still be applied here since this war was largely triggered by an attack to a nation and therefore it bears a nationalistic sense. Second, to impose our will on the enemy is the object of war. U.S.'s goal is to subdue the terrorists with certainty and stop them from further carrying out such activities. The terrorists are not subject to reason, so in order to compel the enemy to the will of the U.S., Bush must resort to force.

2. ***“War is never an isolated act.”*** This idea means that war occurs as a result of a series of previous events. War has no sense without its political context. War never breaks out suddenly and it does not spread immediately. According to Bush, it was because U.S. stood for democracy and freedom that it became the target. Although the 9.11 attack was a shock, it was actually a culmination of terrorist attacks such as the simultaneous bombing at several U.S. embassies in August 1998. It was in this context that Bush declared war against terrorism. As the war goes on, it continues to be intertwined with other political, economic, and social factors.

3. ***“If you want to overcome your enemy, you must match your effort against his power of resistance, which can be expressed as the product of two inseparable factors, the total means at his disposal and the strength of his will.”*** Although war is a trinity where chance plays an important part in deciding the outcome, Clausewitz pointed out that to defeat the enemy, there must be sufficient resources to mobilize. The resources include the tangible and the intangible. The tangible “total means at the disposal” of the terrorists, i.e., their weapons and forces, are small compared to those of America. But the intangible, i.e., the strength of the terrorists' will, is enormous. Their hatred and their willpower constitute a propulsive force. In order to defeat them, Bush needs to mobilize both the physical and spiritual resources. Large budget has been allocated to homeland security and battles against the

terrorism all over the world. Also, to curb the enemy's total means, he also announced a crackdown on terrorist financial network. On the spiritual side, in his speeches, Bush constantly expressed his firm commitment to the war. His point was to transform the personal indignation and fear of the people (including those directly involved in this war) into a collective will and sustained resolve. Both inseparable factors are very important in overwhelming the enemy.

4. "War is not a mere act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried out with other means." This means that war is never an act complete in itself. War originates in a political motive and this motive remains the first and highest consideration. Politics is the end and war is the means. Therefore politics is also not complete without war being taken into account. According to Bush, the anti-terrorism war comes from the political context that U.S.'s values, civilization and way of life are threatened. Bush's policy is to defend these values and preserve American way of life. The war on terrorism serves this very purpose and it remains so throughout.

5. "War does not consist of a single short blow." This idea acknowledges the duration of war. First, it is impossible to put all the resources all at once for war, so the outcome will depend on several successive acts, each influencing the ones that follow, thus the trend of war to the extreme is modified. Besides, war is like fog. With imperfect information and the play of probability, the result is not final, let alone from a single blow. Bush said, "Victory against terrorism will not take place in a single battle, but in a series of decisive actions against terrorist organizations and those who harbor and support them." Anthrax attack followed Sep. 11 tragedy and it caused wide-spread anxiety. Yet the enemy was not easily identified. As Clausewitz advocates concentrated use of overwhelming force, the terrorists are very spread out globally as a counter measure to the strategy of the U.S. Meanwhile, U.S. cracked down the terrorists' financial network and then their establishment in Afghanistan. And the war is still going on as Bush, in his State of Union, called for every American to commit at least two years to the service of the nation.

6. "Everything is very simple in war, but the simplest thing is difficult." Clausewitz's view is realistic and his powerful concept of friction is what distinguishes a real war from a war in theory. Friction is similar to organizational cost in business terms, plus all other

kinds of seemingly trivial happenings, the accumulation of which nonetheless renders the working of the military machine less efficient. The military machine consists of numerous different individuals so the inside friction is ubiquitous. If we view the war on terrorism as a war that also involves a coalition of different countries other than U.S., although all the countries are committed, they nonetheless have different incentives and priorities. To align all these countries, U.S. also needs to use diplomacy and other measures to smooth out the friction. Besides, even inside U.S., there are invariably elements of bureaucracy and chancy mishaps. All these constitute friction. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the imperfect state of the war and the world in general. The factor of friction must be taken into account so that the war on terrorism can be fought on a realistic base.